

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0789

UNCLAS LONDON 05801

PASS LABOR - J. WILLIAM BRUMFIELD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: MINIMUM WAGE FOR YOUTH

1. AS PER TELCON, BRITAIN HAS NO GENERAL MINIMUM WAGE LAW EITHER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OR FOR ADULTS. FOR MANY YEARS IT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED THAT WAGE RATES AND OTHER CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT ARE MATTERS TO BE SETTLED BY VOLUNTARY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, IN THOSE TRADES WHICH TEND TO BE UNDERPAID AND WHERE WORKERS' AND EMPLOYERS. ORGANISATIONS ARE WEAK. MACHINERY EXISTS -- I.E. WAGES COUNCILS -- BY WHICH MINIMUM WAGE RATES, INCLUDING THOSE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE' ARE FIXED AND ENFORCED

BY LAW.

2. A WAGES COUNCIL CONSISTS OF AN EQUAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS REPRESENTING RESPECTIVELY EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS IN THE FIELD COVERED BY THE COUNCIL, TOGETHER WITH NOT MORE THAN THREE INDEPENDENT MEMBERS, ONE OF WHOM IS APPOINTED TO ACT AS CHAIRMAN. IT IS THEREFORE TO A LARGE EXTENT AN INSTRUMENT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, THOUGH IT EXERCISES FUNCTIONS PRESCRIBED BY STATUTE. WAGES COUNCILS ARE SEPARATE AUTONOMOUS BODIES AND THERE IS NO OVERALL CO-ORDINATING AUTHORITY.

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3. A WAGES COUNCIL HAS POWER TO FIX: (A) THE MINIMUM

REMUNERATION TO BE PAID, EITHER GENERALLY OR FOR ANY
PARTICULAR WORK, TO ALL OR ANY OF THE WORKERS INVOLVED;
(B) HOLIDAYS AND HOLIDAY REMUNERATION; (C) OTHER TERMS
AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT. WAGES COUNCILS EXIST
MAINLY IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY AND RETAIL AND WHOLESALE
DISTRIBUTION. ARMSTRONG

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